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May 3, 2005
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NEWS RELEASE

(Editor's Note: Nearly 1,500 students will receive degrees from the University of Dayton during spring commencement at 10 a.m., Sunday, May 8, at the University of Dayton Arena. In all, 1,138 will receive undergraduate degrees, 336 will earn graduate degrees and five will receive doctoral degrees.)

CLASS OF 2005 SHAPED BY SEPT. 11; ONE GRADUATE SHAPED BY THE LOSS OF HER FATHER

DAYTON, Ohio — When Rebecca (Becca) Scott dons a cap and gown and walks down the aisle to receive her University of Dayton diploma on May 8, she will find it hard to keep her emotions in check.

"It went by ridiculously fast, but for me, it's a massive accomplishment," she said. "I honestly didn't think I could do it. My first two years were so miserable. It will be a day of mixed emotions. My dad would have been ecstatic."

Shortly after enrolling at the University of Dayton in 2001, Scott wandered over to the student union food court before class and spotted news footage of airliners striking the World Trade Center towers. "My daddy works there," she said, crying hysterically.

From that day, she became the "9/11 girl" on campus. She's part of a class that started its college days shortly before the shock of Sept. 11, which cast an unforgettable shadow on their four years on campus. But unlike her classmates, who lost some of their innocence about the world that day, she lost her father in the terrorist attack.

Randy Scott, a 48-year-old broker for Eurobrokers, couldn't afford to go to college. He enrolled in night classes after marriage, but never completed a degree. "I was the oldest, the first to leave the house. How excited was he?" Scott asked with a smile. "When we did computer searches on the best schools based on my criteria, the University of Dayton always came up in the top 10. He said, 'Why don't we apply? I wasn't going to college. We were.'"

In August 2001, Scott's parents and two younger sisters "all piled in the van" to make the 700-mile trek from Stamford, Conn., to campus. "Here's a picture of daddy making my

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bed after he moved me into the dorm," she said, pointing to a collage of family pictures.

When Scott packs up those photos and the rest of her belongings, she'll carefully fold a huge flag that includes the names of the victims who died on Sept. 11. The flag, which adorns a wall in her campus apartment, immediately strikes any visitors. It's the elephant in the room.

"It changes your life, but you can't let it ruin it," she said quietly. "Not that I don't miss him everyday because I do. I can't sit around and dwell on it. I have to do things he'd be proud of."

That's why she picked up classes every summer to make up for those she dropped during her first year. "Dad always said, 'We have three of you. No moseying along.' I knew I had to do it in four years."

Like her gregarious father, Scott is outgoing. Over spring break, she made a cold call to Sotheby's International Realty in Greenwich, Conn., and landed an interview — and a job as a marketing coordinator. Working with 65 realtors, she'll put her marketing degree to work as she produces material that will help realtors sell \$1 million-and-up homes.

"The job just fell into my lap," she said. "I know it's not supposed to work that way, but I got my foot in the door at Sotheby's."

Scott continues to be inspired by her father's life. She spearheads the Randy Scott Memorial Golf Outing in August in Stamford each summer. Her father's friends gather on the links to swap stories and raise money for college scholarships.

"We've given out \$20,000 in scholarships so far," she said. "I always think, 'What would make dad proud and appreciative?'"

"He couldn't afford to go to school, and he was all about us going to school."

Scott will receive her college degree on Mother's Day in front of her mother, sisters, eight other relatives, classmates and her "surrogate family" — Dick and Susan Ferguson, her assigned "mentors" when she arrived on campus in 2001.

"We know how proud her mother is, and we can imagine the joy of her father, Randy, in whose footsteps Becca is always walking," said Dick Ferguson, executive director of UD's Fitz Center for Leadership in Community.

Added Susan Ferguson, administrative faculty member in teacher education: "Becca takes with her memories of a loving University of Dayton family and leaves us with an example of perseverance when life brings you unimaginable tragedy."